

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) to (b) The Government of India has consistently supported a political settlement of the conflict in Sri Lanka, by which all communities would be able to realise their aspirations. The details of a devolution package in Sri Lanka are for the Sri Lankan Parliament to determine, in exercise of its sovereign powers.

Full fledged passport office at Shimla

2097. SMT. CHANDRESH KUMARI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether some proposals to open a full fledged passport office at Shimla have been received from State Government of Himachal Pradesh;

(b) if so, the details thereof with date of its pendency;

(c) whether the Union Government are aware that an independent office of foreign employment and manpower export bureau at Shimla has been set up;

(d) whether the Union Government propose to accord the proposal as in (a) for early operation of (c); and

(e) if so, the details thereof and if not, reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Since 1994 the Government of the State of Himachal Pradesh has taken up with the Ministry of External Affairs the proposal to open a full Passport Office at Shimla.

(c) Letters of introduction from the Bureau at Shimla have been received in the PRO, Chandigarh from time to time.

(d) and (e) The recommendation of the Standing Committee of Parliament has been that a passport office should be centrally located and should get an average of 50,000 applications per annum. Such objective criteria have been used to establish passport offices in the country.

The requirements of Himachal Pradesh are at present met by the Passport Application Collection Centre (PACC) which has been in

operation since 1982 at Shimla and the passports are issued from PRO, Chandigarh. At the PACC, Shimla in the last three years the number of applications received has been 1271 in 1997, 1261 in 1998 and 1226 in 1999 which does not meet the norms recommended by the Standing Committee for opening a full fledged Passport Office.

VHP Application to UN social council for consultative status as NGO

2098. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) has applied to the United Nations Social Council for consultative status as a Non-Governmental Organisation;

(b) whether it is also a fact that Pakistan had objected to this and if so, on what grounds; and

(c) what action Government have taken/propose to take to defend the VHP from the Pakistani propaganda and assist it in getting the NGO status?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir; it is understood that the Vishwa Hindu Parishad has applied for grant of consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) as a Non-Governmental Organisation. In accordance with the established procedure, the application of VHP for grant of consultative status is being considered by the Committee on Non-Governmental Organisations set up by the ECOSOC. Clarifications sought by members of the NGO Committee have been provided by the Organisation.

Officers deputed to International Organisations after Retirement

2099. DR. MAHESH CHANDRA SHARMA:

SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of officers of the rank of Joint Secretary and above who were officially deputed to world/international organisations before or after their retirement during the last three years with names and designations; and